

Scientific Integrity at the Environmental Protection Agency

Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)

June 30, 2021

On January 27, 2021 President Biden ordered the Office of Science and Technology Policy to conduct a survey of the effectiveness of scientific integrity policies across the federal government. As a former senior scientist in EPA's Office of Pesticides and Toxic Substances, a **Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)** **Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)** the OSTP mandate caught my attention.

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Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP), which was greeted with trepidation by EPA staff. Reagan's anti environmental and anti labor sentiments were well documented. Gary Trudeau's Doonesbury cartoon strips during the early months of 1981 were filled with depictions of that trepidation. During that time EPA employees were discussing how to keep political appointees from subverting the Agency's mission. We settled on forming a labor union, whose prime mission would be to protect employee's rights to do their work of environmental protection with integrity.

Our first contract proposals included a section devoted to that mission. After three years of talks, we were at Draft 13 on professional ethics provisions aimed at ensuring scientific integrity in the EPA workplace. But when EPA installed new carpeting at headquarters that made many employees sick, and media publicity prompted citizens across the country to report similar illnesses, management broke off negotiations.

Ten years of turmoil passed before management came back to the table. Under the Clinton Administration's Labor-Management Partnership program, the coalition of all EPA unions pushed for Agency-wide ethics protection. In 1999 EPA's Principles of Scientific Integrity were made Agency policy.

Those Principles turned out to be nothing but window dressing¹, because they did not include a way to settle disputes arising from them. Instead, they

¹ See for example the testimony of Administrator Carol Browner before the House Committee on Science. *106th Congress (1999-2000) House Committee Meetings By Date: Intolerance at EPA. U.S. Congressional Bibliographies. October 4, 2000.* The Administrator proudly proclaimed in her testimony that EPA had adopted a set of Principles of Scientific Integrity while attempting to refute charges that the Agency retaliated against Dr. Marsha Coleman-Adebayo for her work showing severe adverse health problems among miners of vanadium in Africa.

contained a poison pill².

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Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP) – filed grievances on behalf of employees based on violations of the Principles. The grievances went nowhere, management’s invariable response: “the Principles are only a policy statement and are not grievable.”

When the Obama Administration arrived it established its own scientific integrity program modeled after that of 1999. While EPA, in true bureaucratic style, hired a Scientific Integrity Officer to manage it, window dressing it remained.

Currently EPA’s Office of Scientific Integrity runs a program completely dominated by management. Each program office designates a *management official* to serve as Deputy Scientific Integrity Officer, to whom employees are to report complaints. This assembly of management officials constitutes the EPA Scientific Integrity Committee. Union representatives have repeatedly sought representation on the Committee, to no avail. There is no place or function in any part of the process for elected representatives of rank and file employees.

EPA’s Office of Scientific Integrity runs an elegantly designed and executed website, but as an insurer of EPA employee rights to do their work of environmental protection with integrity it is still all window dressing.

Scientific integrity at EPA depends, as it always has, on the skills and dedication of its rank and file employee experts, but when disputes arise, scientific integrity at EPA is whatever current management says it is.

² “This memorandum is not intended to, and it does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, by any party against the United States, in departments, agencies or entities, its officers, employees, or agents or any other person.”